

IMPORTING A POPULATION

BY EDWARD P. IRWIN,
In the Pacific Monthly

(Continued from Yesterday)

You Can Lead the Horse to Water, But—

The throng of dissatisfied and discontented Russians who faced Governor Frear that 1st day of April, 1910, was a part of Hawaii's investment in men,—an investment that did not look very promising. For with them from Manchuria had come suspicion, indolence, discontent and anarchy. A few of them had been three or four months in the Islands, but most of them had arrived two or three weeks before and had not even gone to spy out the land and learn to what kind of a country they had come to make their homes. Yet they stood before the Governor, sullen, low-browed, obstinate, and declared, "We will starve and die, but we will not work; we will not go to the plantations."

And all that the Governor could say to them was that in this land of the free he who will not work may not eat. And in Hawaii he who will work must perforce work on the sugar plantations.

The principal and almost the only industry of any great importance in Hawaii is the production of sugar. The rich men are the ones who have made their fortunes directly or indirectly out of sugar.

And the planting, cultivation and harvesting of sugar-cane, and the conversion of the juice of the plant into sugar, requires the labor of many thousands of men. The areas planted to cane have increased rapidly of recent years, outstripping the influx of men to work the fields.

Consequently the planters are eager to do almost anything that will add to the supply of cheap labor, even to the extent of spending many thousands of dollars annually in the importation of men. The planters need brawn rather than brain. Which is not to say, however, that the rest of the community looks at the matter in the same light.

Assisting Immigration.

Formerly the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association was permitted to recruit and import foreign labor, and it sent its own agents to foreign countries to look for and ship to the Islands the men so much needed. But a few years ago the immigration authorities at Washington put a stop to this and a decision was rendered to the effect that labor could be recruited only through the Territorial Government.

The Territorial Government had not the funds to carry on the work, but the planters got around this by contributing directly to the support of the Government's campaign for men, until the powers at the National Capital, through Act of Congress, ruled that no person or corporation should be permitted to contribute to the immigration fund.

But once more the planters solved the problem. At the last session of the Hawaiian Legislature, at the urgent solicitation of the sugar planters, a law was enacted imposing a special two per cent income tax on all incomes in excess of \$4,000. It was provided that the money thus realized should go into a special fund, a quarter of which was to be used for conservation of natural resources and the remaining three-fourths for immigration purposes. As the planters are almost the only ones who have incomes of \$4,000 or more, it is really they who pay the special tax. The money being used almost exclusively for their benefit, this is as it should be.

Results Unsatisfactory.

Unfortunately, however, the results obtained from the expenditure of the immigration fund have been anything but satisfactory. The immigrants recruited by the Board of Immigration of the Territory and brought to the Islands at public expense, their passage being paid out of the special fund, have not proved to be all it was hoped they would. In fact, the work of the Board of Immigration has proved so farcical that the next Legislature will, in all probability, repeal the Immigration and Conservation Act, or, if it does not repeal the law, it may amend it so as to continue the imposition of the special income tax, and provide that the revenue therefrom shall go into the general fund instead of being used for the purchase of men. The Russian fiasco has probably, in fact, brought about the end of assisted immigration. The general sentiment of the community on the subject was expressed in the Hawaiian Star, of the issue of May 7. That daily says:

Time for a Change.

"There probably could be no safer prophecy than that the next legislature will abolish the little government within the Territorial Government, created by the legislature of 1909. The lending of the tax machinery to raise a special fund for the purpose of promoting immigration and establishing the conservation of natural resources is meant. As to immigration, it has been worse than a failure—it has been a costly blunder from first to last thus far, and the worst of it, perhaps, is not yet in sight. . . .

"The mistake about immigration is not attributable to the mistakes of the agents, the disparagement of these gentlemen by public opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. It is a fundamental blunder, the entire system, with reference both to the Azores and to Manchuria. The Government, with the approval of the legislature, has grafted the recruiting methods of the dead-and-gone contract system upon the seedling called the Americanization of Hawaii. The whole business is in virtual violation of the law against assisted immigration. It is a sewing of new cloth upon an old garment—a putting of new wine into old bottles—with the results of rending and bursting.

"The time has come—it was here long ago, but not recognized — when

the planters must work out their own salvation, with correspondence to new conditions, in regard to labor supply. They must do as agriculturists and industrialists generally are doing elsewhere, both in America and other countries: make up a schedule based on what they can offer in wages, the comforts and conveniences of living and the prospects of life in these Islands. . . . No luster was added to the fair repute of Hawaii for the making of wise and wholesome laws, when its Legislature passed enactments for the benefit of a class."

The sentiments above expressed are considerably milder than those commonly heard on the street when the working out of the immigration problem is under discussion.

How the Chinese Came.

The success of the sugar industry in Hawaii was founded on the old vicious system of contract labor, most of the plantation hands prior to annexation being Chinese, who were brought to the Islands under contract to work for a

certain number of years. They worked then for wages which would now, even in the Territory where the price of a man's toil is all too little, be considered infinitesimal.

But the annexation of Hawaii to the United States in 1898 extended to the Islands the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as the contract-labor laws, and the planters' chief supply of labor was shut off. The sugar planters profited by annexation in that their sugar was admitted to the States duty free, but they immediately faced a serious labor problem, a problem which they are still trying to solve.

The first Chinese came to Hawaii as far back as 1789, as a member of the crew of the Eleanor, which vessel touched at the Islands of Maui and Hawaii. At the time of Vancouver's third and last voyage, in 1794, the entire non-native population of the Sandwich Islands consisted of John Young, Isaac Davis, a Mr. Boyd, seven renegade whites, and one Chinese.

(To be continued)

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